



# The Heritage Junction Dispatch

A Publication of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

Volume 43, Issue 4

July - August 2017

## Calendar

### Monday, July 24

Board of Directors Meeting  
6:30 PM Saugus Station

### Tuesday, August 1

Deadline for the September-  
October *Dispatch*

### Monday, August 28

Board of Directors Meeting  
6:30 PM Saugus Station

### OutWest Concert Series at The Main, 24266 Main St in Newhall. 8:00 PM

Friday, July 28: An evening with  
Joyce Woodson. \$20 for SCVHS  
members

Friday, August 25: An evening with  
John Zipperer. \$20 for SCVHS  
members

Check [www.scvhistory.org](http://www.scvhistory.org) for  
other upcoming events.



Articles and inquiries regarding  
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To arrange for filming at Heritage  
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## President's Message

by Alan Pollack



In the last issue of  
the *Dispatch*, we  
explored the life  
of Robert Callahan  
and his plans to  
build Ramona Village  
on Washington  
Boulevard in Culver  
City. We now

continue his story.

### MISSION VILLAGE

The infamous stock market crash of  
October, 1929, wiped out Callahan's  
finances and he had to eventually cease  
construction of Ramona Village. However,  
Callahan's dream was not to be defeated  
entirely. Like a phoenix rising out of the  
ashes, Callahan was able to obtain new  
financial backing from two local merchants,  
and on June 5, 1932, announced the near

completion of his Mission Village on the  
site of the defunct Ramona Village. The new  
complex was to have fifteen Spanish-type  
buildings and twenty-six Indian pueblos. As  
described in the *LA Times*: "Completed is a  
Fiesta Hall, an old trading post, constructed  
out of weathered beams and cross ties, and  
a '49 museum with \$25,000 inlaid mahogany  
bar shipped from one of the historic  
mining towns of Northern California. The  
museum has been equipped with several  
hundred relics of Kit Carson, the Custer  
battlefield, of the days of Ramona, and other  
pieces around which thrilling stories of  
the Indian and pioneer are told". Mission  
Village was also to be an auto park with  
accommodations for the motoring public.  
Mission Village was formally opened with an  
elaborate entertainment program on the  
evening of July 23, 1932.

*Continued on Page 2*

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## President's Message

*Continued from page 1*

A reporter for the Plymouth auto dealers of Los Angeles visited Mission Village on July 30, 1932. His account of the visit: "The old trading post at Mission Village was constructed by Indians whose ancestors constructed San Juan Capistrano Mission. Crossties, mud and straw were used for the walls. Massive beams sixty-five years old, once used as runners in the wine cellar of the Camulos Ranch on which the story of Ramona was laid, act as a mantle above the ten-foot fireplace. Over this fireplace is a \$3000 pueblo painting, done on cement by F. Tenney Johnson, celebrated Western artist. The heavy wooden floors of the trading post were taken from the walls of a '49 saloon near Chinese Camp. In the barroom are many relics and antiques, branding irons from the Pio Pico Ranch, a three-legged stool used by Helen Hunt Jackson when writing part of her immortal story 'Ramona'...two rifles used in the Custer Massacre, and five huge wine casks taken from the wine cellar of the Del Valle Ranch above Newhall". There was also an Indian Kiva built as a replica of an Indian shrine in San Alfonso [sic], New Mexico, and "fifteen Spanish-type bungalows equipped with all modern conveniences for housekeeping". It was the first major motel and mobile home park to be built in the US.

Callahan's Mission Village was a great success for the next twenty years, but then bad luck struck yet again. In 1962, the state of California decided to build the Santa Monica Freeway right through the Village site. Callahan would have to pack up and move elsewhere. His original plan was to move the village to a two-acre site at 7525 Lankershim Boulevard in North Hollywood, but this location was abandoned due to zoning difficulties.

### CALLAHAN'S OLD WEST

Finally Callahan settled on and purchased a 14-acre site at 136 Sierra Highway in Mint Canyon, where he built a village of Indian tepees and hogans, frontier cabins, spirit poles, and a small Western fort. He called his new attraction Indian-Frontier Village. It is better known today as Callahan's Old West. The Mint Canyon project would also house his extensive collection of Indian and pioneer artifacts. There would be replicas of a Mohawk wigwam, Sioux tepee, Seminole chickee, Cherokee lodge, Laguna Pueblo, and Navajo Hogan. In addition, Callahan uncovered an old gold mine in the canyon behind the village. He claimed that outlaw Tiburcio Vasquez was thought to have used the canyon as a hiding place for his horse. He constructed a museum in the style of a Pueblo Indian dwelling to house his collection of 10,000 horseshoes, 412 old wagon wheels,

400 cowbells, and a 25-foot painting of the old Santa Fe Trail. There would also be Kiva prayer houses, the Ramona Chapel that he moved from Mission Village, a little red school house, a replica of a cabin once occupied by the outlaw Emmett Dalton, a Boot Hill cemetery, and a frontier fort.

Indian-Frontier Village officially opened on May 15, 1965. It took two years to finish construction. In addition to the previously mentioned attractions, there was also a gun collection, miner's cabins, a gold camp rolling store, and an outlaw saloon. An official opening ceremony was held on May 30. As part of the attraction, Callahan set up a theatre filled with authentic leather seats from the old San Francisco Opera House. This theatre later became the headquarters of the Canyon Theatre Guild, before they moved to their current location in Old Town Newhall. On weekends, the village featured special attractions like Indian dancers, Old West gunslingers, and vaudeville acts. Callahan proudly stated "I have used my own funds to buy the acreage and erect the Village, and everything is paid for. I am not out to make a killing. Any profits will be used to build more attractions and buy more Indian and Old West relics. Eventually I hope to be able to turn the entire project over to some governmental agency to be used by the public". The Village was also used for many movie and television shows.

Alas, a government-run facility was not meant to be. According to the Times, shortly after opening the Village in 1965, Callahan was hit by a train. He survived the accident but lived in poor health thereafter. Finally, in August, 1973, Callahan, now in his early 80s, put the Village up for sale. At the time of the sale, the Callahans had retired to their Toluca Lake home, and the Village was only open on Sundays. Due to his ill health, Callahan set the sales price at \$125,000 although he had spent \$160,000 to build the site. Callahan died on January 10, 1981, at the age of 88. Callahan's Old West survived only as a ghost town after his death. Callahan's widow Marion maintained ownership of the site, renting the village out as a location site for movies, and as a theatre venue for the Canyon Theatre Guild until their move to Newhall. Marion eventually donated various artifacts from Callahan's Old West to the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society, along with two of the buildings, the Ramona Chapel, and the little red schoolhouse. The buildings and artifacts can still be seen at Heritage Junction in Newhall. The remains of Callahan's Old West still stand today on Sierra Highway in Mint Canyon.

All quotes are attributed to the original articles in the Los Angeles Times.

## A Half Century of Getting The Weather Wrong

by John Boston

*"If you saw a heat wave, would you wave back?"*

— Steven Wright

I am smarter than I look, and in the on-again/off-again 40 years I was with the local alleged paper, I tried to stay away from the hourly soap operas. If The Signal were an Indian, its name would be: Many Pies To Throw.

But, twice, I was the editor. I am a lucky duck in that I got to realize my dream, which lasted about 20 minutes. I guess that's enough time for a dream. Lewis Grizzard once noted: "Being a newspaper columnist is like being married to a nymphomaniac. It's great for the first two weeks." Actually, I love being a columnist. Editor is an entirely different psychosis.

One of my pet peeves with The Formerly Mighty Signal was the weather. Mostly, the staff didn't particularly care what went in the paper. Simple things like the City Council being for or against, Hart won or Hart lost, So-&-So Murdered Outside Tony Valencia Bordello vs. So-&-So Rotary's Man of the Year, the particulars often didn't matter. Me? I'm a meteorological whiner. I can work all day outside when it's 120° F, without shirt or hat. What I don't like is climbing in and out of vehicles parked in the August sun where it's so hot, you can bake bread, then, going into a meat freezer office. I HATE sweating in nice clothes.

Not that The Signal ever had a functioning air conditioner.

Like some daft Knight Templar, I thought I could roll up my sleeves and build Earth's finest community newspaper. We did, for a while, by the way. When I was editor, twice, a few months each time, we earned the Grand Sweepstakes Award for daily community newspaper, the first time for in all of California and the next, the entire United States and Canada. Interestingly, every time the gomers in Georgia who owned The Signal came to visit, it was in part to fire me.

Why? I flirted with approaching a grown-up salary.

One of the first tasks was to fix our comic weather reporting. My first week as editor, I did a little digging. The paper was owned by that pinch-penny Georgia conglomerate that had to be physically restrained from selling office furniture for kindling. So you'd think in one of their hourly audits, they would have noticed that the Editorial Dept. had been paying for three separate weather reporting services and using just one.

I haven't looked at the paper in eons. But I know the very first thing people used to see, atop page A-1, was that day's

weather. UFO's could have landed in Canyon Country (I think they have and we just missed reporting it) and still, the first thing one's eyeballs would notice is the happy little weather icon and the forecast.

The Signal's weather was always — ALWAYS — wrong.

Often, it was wrong, big time. I hate that, especially in the summer. In modern times, most people have accurate thermometers in their cars, telling them it's 110° out. Tens of thousands of Santa Clarita thermometers — rightfully placed in proper shade — all said it was 110°. Commuters would have to dodge lanes 1 & 2 of Interstate 5 because adding to the heat was a volcanic eruption.

And what did our local paper's merry little mercury reading boast? Partly cloudy and 88°.

About the only place it was 88° was inside the meat counter in Castaic at Gallion's Corner. Let Steve Gallion come forth and deny it.

Now I can understand the National Weather Service screwing up. They're the government, the very one that wants more money to combat global warming. You'd think they could make a better case by fudging the numbers 25° IN THE OTHER DIRECTION. But it's not like insanity makes sense.

Unlike most of the staff, I didn't hitchhike from my homeless shelter in Van Nuys to work as a Signal staff member. I interacted with people from this valley. Day after day, week after week, year after year, we kept screwing up the weather. By big, huge numbers.

How can you trust a community newspaper if they're too dumb to notice it's hot out? Or cold? Or, worse, staff runs the cliché heat wave feature on the front page — next to the weather forecast box that calls for light snow flurries?

Is it that we were distracted — hooked up to iPads, cell phones, texting — and we're just not aware of something profoundly fundamental: the temperature? Is it that we just accept lying as The New Reality? I have no idea what this strange and stubborn state of denial is with this valley's media and weather. Even the usually reliable KHTS radio falls victim to the ruse of offering its customers the weather, even though it's for Boise, Idaho.

How can you not just sense, from your own experience, that 112° does not remotely feel like 82°?

I've had more than a half-a-hundred summers in the Santa Clarita Valley. They are all annoyingly hot and force me

*Continued on Page 4*

## John Boston Article

*Continued from page 3*

westward to the seashore of Ventura. I remember buying 500 pounds of ice from Newhall Ice in a 1970s heat wave and used it to cool the swimming pool because the water was too hot to even stick in your toe.

I miss the days when the valley was eclectic and the paper had something called a soul and a personality. Back in the 1930s, Signal editor A.B. "Dad" Thatcher recalled a conversation with an old cowboy during a heat wave. The cowboy strolled into The Signal office to report an unusual by-product of the sizzling temps. "It was so hot today," the cowboy told Dad Thatcher, "I saw a coyote chasing a rabbit. And they were both walking."

*That, I find believable.*

*(With more than 10,000 essays and opinion pieces, SCV author John Boston is America's most prolific humor writer. Weekly, he pens The Time Ranger & SCV History for the SCVBeacon.com. Every two weeks, he writes the SCV History for your SCV Gazette. Don't forget to check out his national humor, entertainment & swashbuckling commentary website, [THEjohnboston.com](http://THEjohnboston.com). You'll be smiling for a week...) © 2017 by John Boston*

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## Thanks to those who volunteered since the last issue of the *Dispatch*:

<b>W</b> eekend Docents	Sandra Cattell	Barbara Martinelli
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	Evan Decker	Alan Pollack
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	Barbara Martinelli	

<b>F</b> irst-Sunday Questers*	Roberta Harris	Linda Likins
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	Barbara Martinelli	Anna Schindler

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	Cynthia Harris	Pat Horanberg
	Linda Hinz	Jenewyn Van Wie
	Libby Hinz	

<b>G</b> rounds	Mike Jarel	Cathy Martin
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\*Don't know who the Questers are? See [www.questers1944.org](http://www.questers1944.org)

## How Do You Stage a Horse Race?

by Margi Bertram



Those who have visited the William S. Hart Museum are likely familiar with the fact that Hart played Messala in a stage version of the Lew Wallace novel. The story is told through the eyes of Judah Ben-Hur, a young Jewish noble. It

features elements of friendship, betrayal, revenge, love lost, love salvaged, redemption, and of course, a chariot race. This novel was unusual for its time, as literature had moved away from historical, romantic, adventure fiction. People were more interested in reading realistic fiction about contemporary life.

At this time a primary product for the major publishers was school readers. Having an excerpt of the sea battle or the chariot race from Ben-Hur created interest among young readers. As a result, Ben-Hur became one of the most requested books at libraries.

This popularity spurred widespread interest in adapting the novel for the stage. Wallace resisted for nearly twenty years, concerned about how to sensitively treat the portrayal of Christ by an actor, and the difficulty in recreating a realistic chariot race in a theatre setting.

To solve the first problem, rather than casting an actor, they came up with an idea to represent Christ only as a 25,000-candlepower beam of white light.

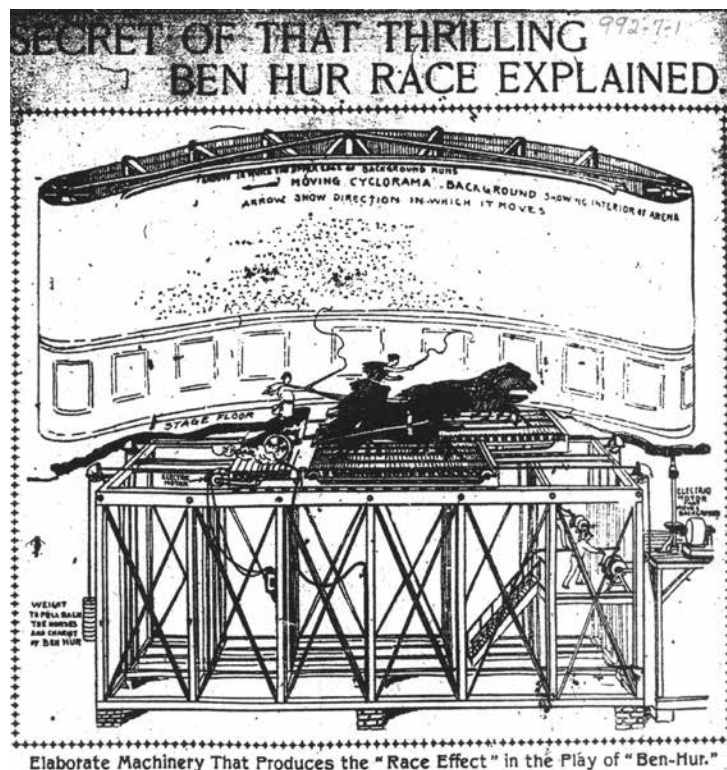
But what about the concerns with how to stage that chariot race? In today's creative theatre world, one can imagine a production involving a race staged with human actors wearing oversized horse heads, similar to the treatment in the stage version of The Lion King. The 1899 show staged the race using two teams of four live horses pulling two actual chariots, running side by side on treadmills installed in the stage floor, supplemented with a mass of wheels, steel cables, and levers. The background

was represented on a cyclorama backdrop rotating in the opposite direction, completing the illusion that the chariots and horses were actually moving on stage at great speed. When the author Lew Wallace saw the elaborate sets and staging, he exclaimed, "My God. Did I set all this in motion?" I would love to have seen this amazing contraption in person!

The stage production opened at the Broadway Theater in New York City on November 29, 1899, and became a hit Broadway show, best known for its use of spectacle. By the time the show closed in April, 1920, more than 20 million people had seen it.

William S. Hart played the original Messala, and stayed on for the second season of the play, the 1900 season. Wallace, who had been present during the rehearsals, told Hart after the debut performance, "I want to thank you for giving me the Messala that I drew in my book."

Although it received mixed reviews from the critics, audiences loved it and packed the house for its 3-hour and 29-minute performance. There was also a national tour that continued for 21 years, including venues in Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago and Baltimore. There was even an international staging in England and Australia. By the time the show closed, it is estimated it had been seen by over twenty million people.



Elaborate Machinery That Produces the "Race Effect" in the Play of "Ben-Hur."

Due to the popularity of the novel and stage play, in 1907, the first film version of Ben-Hur was produced. William S. Hart reprised the role of Messala. This inexpensive production was only 15 minutes in length and had nowhere near the level of spectacle of the play. Because the producer failed to gain permission from the Wallace estate (Wallace died in 1905), there was a law suit, which resulted in the filmmakers being ordered to pay \$25,000 in damages, likely more than it cost to make the film.

## Winema Riddle, Peace Maker

By Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel

Toby "Winema" Riddle was born in 1846 on a Modoc Reservation near Klamath Lake. These were troubled times. The U.S. government was pressuring the Modoc and Klamath people to leave their land and move to a reservation near Klamath Lake. Whites seeking gold were demanding land to mine in northern California and southern Oregon.

Toby's birth name was Kaichkona, but her childhood name was soon changed to Nannooktowa, which means "Strange Child," reflecting the strange red hair she is said to have had. As a teen, she rescued several children whose canoe became caught in rapids. The children most certainly would have died without her intervention. After this, her name was changed to Winema, which means "Woman Chief."

She was daring enough as a teen to ride with Indian raiders to steal horses from their enemies. No other women were known as being as brave as Winema. She even led her people to victory when they were attacked by a rival tribe.

Her next courageous act was to defy her father when he selected an Indian husband for her. She chose instead to marry a paleface named Frank Riddle, who had come to California from Kentucky to make his fortune in gold. Winema adopted the English name "Toby" after her marriage.

Frank and Toby were initially shunned by the tribe for this decision, until Frank gifted several horses to her father. Toby studied English and served as an interpreter between the U.S. Army and the Modoc and Klamath native communities.

During the 1872-73 Modoc War, aka the Lava Beds War, she warned several white commissioners that if they attended Modoc Peace Talks, they would be killed. They did not listen to her, and they were killed.

The chairman, Alfred Meacham, was saved by Toby from being killed and scalped. He had been wounded and was lying on the ground. A warrior leaned over him to scalp him, and brave Toby yelled that soldiers were coming. The warriors quickly retreated, and Toby tended to Meacham.

Following this heroic act by Toby, Meacham wrote a play about the tragedy of the Lava Beds War. The play starred Toby, who toured around the country for two years with Meacham, along with her husband Frank and their son Jeff. Meacham also wrote a book about Toby and dedicated it to her:

"This book is written with the avowed purpose of doing honor to the heroic Wi-ne-ma who at the peril of her life sought to save the ill-fated peace commission to the Modoc Indians in 1873. The woman to whom the writer is indebted, under God, for saving his life."

The traveling play ended in New York. Thereafter, the Riddle family returned to Oregon to settle on the Klamath Reservation. Meacham petitioned Congress to award Toby a military pension for her service to the country as a peace maker, and for her translating services during the Modoc War. In 1891, her military pension was honored, and she received \$25 monthly until her death in 1920 from influenza.

Toby is remembered for her courageous actions during her entire life: For rescuing her playmates in the raging river; for marrying a white man; for her language skills; for her role as an interpreter, mediator and peacemaker; as being the first woman honored by a congressional act during war; and the first to receive a military pension.

Toby Winema Riddle is considered one of the greatest Native American women of all time and takes her place in history alongside Sara Winnimucca and Sacajawea.



## A Rancho Camulos Fourth of July

by Maria Christopher

As another summer arrives in the Santa Clara River Valley, let's take some time to reflect on how summer was celebrated in the "good old days," specifically in the last half of the 19th century at Rancho Camulos. Rancho Camulos, a National Historic Landmark near Piru, is what remains of the 1839 Mexican land grant to Antonio del Valle, the roughly 48,000 acre Rancho San Francisco (part of the San Fernando Mission lands). It included most of what is now Santa Clarita. Rancho Camulos was the approximately 1,800 acre westernmost portion of that land grant, which was inherited by Antonio's son, Ignacio. Ignacio and his descendants lived on the Rancho from 1861 to 1923.

The annual Fourth of July barbecue was the highlight of summer at Rancho Camulos, a Mecca to which family and friends would come from throughout Southern California. In the early days, they came by horseback and carriage. The "iron horse" arrived in 1887, with the construction of the Southern Pacific Railway branch line from Saugus. The train allowed for a comparatively quicker and more comfortable trip down the Santa Clara River Valley.

The Fourth of July was an occasion for a huge fiesta combining the traditions of the Californios with those of the Americano. Visitors were a veritable "Who's Who" of the area. The guests would stay for days, filling the sleeping rooms and outdoor verandas. Throughout the day, sounds of dancing and singing filled the air. Skits, games, outdoor recreational activities, and lots of conversations and stories occupied the hours. Prayers and services at the Catholic family chapel built in the 1860s were an important part of the gathering.

Food and drink were abundant. Huge sides of beef, pork, or goat would be roasted and served to the guests, accompanied by the bountiful harvest of fruits and vegetable from the fields. The wine flowed under the

spreading limbs of the huge walnut tree planted in the 1860s, and under the shade of the grape arbor planted with mission grape stock from the San Gabriel Mission.

In 1888, Walter Lindley, a Los Angeles physician and educator, included an account of his experience at the Camulos' annual Fourth of July barbecue in a book he co-wrote called *California of the South*. This is what he had to say:

*"On this occasion the family celebrated a combined Mexican and American independence day. The guests arrived by train. Senora del Valle welcomed them at the entrance to the garden. A servant showed them to their rooms to freshen up. Then lunch was announced, where Senator Del Valle (Ignacio and Isabel del Valle's oldest child) presided. The meal consisted of roast pig, various "Spanish" dishes, chilies, olives, a dessert, claret and white wine and black coffee. The afternoon's program consisted of horseback riding, walking, hunting, singing, reading, mountain climbing, or sleeping. They served dinner at 7:00 PM. in the arbor brightly lit with lanterns. A roast kid meal and groaning board was preceded by a musical interlude, with piano, organ and guitar with song. The day ended with a fireworks display. The del Valles had fiestas like this two or three times a year. They usually lasted from three to five days with as many as 100 guests arriving and departing by train."*



*Del Valle family picnic at Rancho Camulos ca. 1900*

Family, friends, food, fun, and fireworks were the main ingredients of a fabulous Fourth of July at Camulos, just as they continue to be today along the Heritage Valley corridor, historic

Highway 126. Times are quieter now at Rancho Camulos. The private property is only open for events and for docent-led tours, usually on Sunday afternoons at 1:00, 2:00, and 3:00 PM. Check the museum website, [www.ranhocamulos.org](http://www.ranhocamulos.org), for the latest schedule and details. Step back in time. Come on out and discover Rancho Camulos . . . Where the History, Myth, and Romance of Old California still linger . . .



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and  
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Ad for Callahan's Mission Village; see page 1